

Ranking Category–GRAZING LANDS HEALTH

Primary Resource Concerns

- Degraded Plant Condition–Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health (Range, Pasture)
- Degraded Plant Condition–Excessive Plant Pest Pressure
- Livestock Production Limitation–Inadequate Water

Eligible Land Uses

- Range, Pasture

Priority

- All applications scheduling perimeter or boundary fence on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) expired on or before September 30, 2016, and will be maintained as grass for the entire contract length, shall be designated as **HIGH PRIORITY**.
- Applications scheduling financially assisted Conservation Practice (CP) 528–Prescribed Grazing for three years shall be designated as **MEDIUM PRIORITY**.
- All other applications will be designated as **LOW PRIORITY**.

Additional Requirements for this Category

- The unit of concern will be converted to a grazing plan during the life of the contract that will:
 - o On range, achieve 50 percent or less use for the year on the key forage species in identified grazing areas.
 - o On pasture or hay (crop), meet Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) requirements for regrowth by the end of the growing season.
- On native range, producer will implement a monitoring system using grazing exclusion cages approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that will verify the degree of use of the key forage species in identified key grazing areas, in the defined or planned grazing system, for the life of the contract.
- Cropland converted to grazing land will make up no more than 20 percent of the application acres to be eligible for this ranking category.
- Permanent boundary fencing will be present prior to any financial assistance being paid on any grazing land practice. **Exception:** Boundary fences are not required for hay land pastures.

State Issues

1. Answer the following question if the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP). The agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.

- (a) Is the program application to support the development of a CAP? If the answer is “Yes,” do not answer any other state level questions. If the answer is “No,” proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (400 points)

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2. Answer the following question related to resource concerns:

- Unit of concern has resource concerns of Degraded Plant Condition - Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health and/or Degraded Plant Condition—Excessive Plant Pest Pressure. (100 points)

3. If applicable, answer ONE of the following questions related to the amount of rest to be provided by a planned grazing system that is financially assisted under conservation practice (CP) 528—Prescribed Grazing. If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

- (a) The planned grazing system will provide rest for greater than 91 percent of the days during the growing season. (205 points)
- (b) The planned grazing system will provide rest no more than 90.9 percent and no less than 86 percent of the days during the growing season. (180 points)
- (c) The planned grazing system will provide rest no more than 85.9 percent and no less than 82 percent of the days during the growing season. (155 points)
- (d) The planned grazing system will provide rest no more than 81.9 percent and no less than 74 percent of the days during the growing season. (130 points)
- (e) The planned grazing system will provide rest no more than 73.9 percent and no less than 49 percent of the days during the growing season. (105 points)
- (f) The planned grazing system will provide rest no more than 48.9 percent and no less than 30 percent of the days during the growing season. (80 points)

4. If applicable, answer ONE of the following questions related to tamarisk (salt cedar), old world bluestem, or sericea lespedeza infestation. If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

- (a) Agricultural land is infested with up to 10 percent of tamarisk (salt cedar), old world bluestem, or sericea lespedeza and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (60 points)
- (b) Agricultural land is infested with no more than 20 percent and no less than 10.1 percent of tamarisk (salt cedar), old world bluestem, or sericea lespedeza and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (50 points)
- (c) Agricultural land is infested with no more than 30 percent and no less than 20.1 percent of tamarisk (salt cedar), old world bluestem, or sericea lespedeza and the producer will implement a plan to control these species. (40 points)

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5. Answer the following question related to brush infestation:

- The grazing unit is infested with an undesirable brush species at the medium priority level as indicated in the NRCS FOTG for brush management and the producer will implement a plan to control the brush species. (10 points)

6. If applicable, answer ALL of the following questions related to Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT) Ecological Focus Areas. If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

- (a) Any part of the unit of concern is located within a Terrestrial Species Ecological Focus Area and treatment of the resource concern will have a direct habitat benefit to a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in the Ecological Focus Area. (10 points)
- (b) Any part of the unit of concern is located within an Aquatic Species Ecological Focus Area and treatment of the resource concern will have a direct habitat benefit to a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in the Ecological Focus Area. (5 points)

Local Issues

Answer the following questions related to the application:

1. Is the program application to support the development of a CAP? If answer is “Yes,” do not answer any other local level questions. If the answer is “No,” proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (250 points)
2. Application includes at least one practice with a lifespan of 10 years or greater, as documented in the FOTG. (20 points)
3. Practices are scheduled to be completed within four years. (20 points)
4. Participant requested a conservation plan for this application prior to August 31, 2016. (40 points)
5. Application was deferred from a previous funding period in the Program Contracts System (ProTracts). (40 points)
6. If applicable, where livestock are wintered on grazing land where perennial streams are located, plan of operations will remove livestock access to the streams. (30 points)
7. Unit of concern contains 50 percent or greater expired or expiring CRP land and will be used for grazing or haying purposes. (30 points)
8. Plan of operations includes a prescribed burn after brush management. (30 points)

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9. Plan of operations includes a prescribed burn. However, continuous annual burning will not occur. (5 points)

10. Participant has attended (in the past four years) a one-day grazing management workshop. Workshop curriculum must have included any of the following topics: plant physiology, grazing systems and design, range and pasture ecology, grazing and rangeland health, prescribed burning, forage and livestock balance, forage and resource inventory, soil and grazing resource interaction, and wildlife habitat creation/development/improvement through grazing management. (15 points)

11. Participant has attended (in the past four years) a multi-day grazing management school. Workshop curriculum must have included all of the following topics: plant physiology, grazing systems and design, range and pasture ecology, grazing and rangeland health, prescribed burning, forage and livestock balance, forage and resource inventory, soil and grazing resource interaction, and wildlife habitat creation/development/improvement through grazing management. (20 points)